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ABSTRACT

This brief paper presents the concept of transition counseling between a junior high school and its feeder school(s), designed to make the change from elementary into junior high less traumatic. Aside from routine sixth grade counseling, the counselors expanded their base of counseling to include all types of problems as well as all grade levels. Four basic goals were identified: (1) developing life adjustment goals with students; (2) developing socialization skills; (3) developing career awareness and planning; (4) orienting students to new people, places and tasks. (Author/YRJ)

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Counseling in the Elementary Feeder Schools

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For a good many years, the counselors at Whittier Junior High School in Flint, Michigan have been concerned about the transition from elementary into junior high. In some cases, this transition has been traumatic. Over the years we have experimented with several ideas to make this transition less difficult for the students, but the one we find is working most successfully is for the counselor to spend one day a week at an elementary feeder school becoming acquainted with the sixth graders. By knowing each of the sixth graders personally, we can better program them into the seventh grade, especially in math and English, and, most significantly, we know their problems before entrance into a large, strange school and can buffer situations that may arise.

How did this program come about? Fortunately for us at Whittier, the Consultant in Counseling Services wished to initiate a pilot program in career guidance in the elementary schools feeding into one of the junior high schools in the city. Since Flint has no elementary school counselors the task was to be undertaken by the junior high counselors from the junior high school selected to pilot the program. The idea was broached to all junior high schools and a volunteer was asked for. Whittier volunteered and was accepted.

To work out goals and objectives several workshops were held involving the principals of five feeder schools, the principal and assistant principal of counseling at Whittier, five counselors and the consultant. It soon became apparent that four of the five elementary principals wanted much more from the counselors than just career education counseling. This was fine with the counselors! It was agreed that in these four schools the counselors would expand their base of counseling to include all types of problems as well as all grade levels: sixth graders primarily, other grades on a referral basis. The goals and objectives were then broadened into four major areas:

(1) Developing life adjustment goals with students
(2) Developing socialization skills
(3) Developing career awareness and planning
(4) Orienting students to new people, places and tasks.

In addition to the workshops to develop goals and objectives, one was held with a practicing elementary counselor from Swartz Creek to help us develop skills in dealing with the younger child. This was most helpful!

Many good things have come from our experience in the elementary school:

(1) We have been able to recognize the potential drop out very early and to work on attendance and attitudes towards school.
(2) We have been able to help in the formation of attitudes and values.
(3) We have been helpful to students with self identity problems.

(4) We have made referrals for those needing special attention resulting in their getting help earlier.
(5) We have been helpful in eliminating fear of new places, new faces.
(6) Kids now know what counselors are for and how to make use of them.
(7) We have programmed students into the 7th grade program more realistically.
(8) We have had positive feedback from students and parents.
(9) We have had positive feedback from teachers and administration.

The elementary counseling program is continuing, and because of its success is being funded this year by the Welch Foundation. Their funding has enabled us to have an additional counselor in the junior high to aid with the counseling program.

CG 011441